

Meeting Summary

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY POLICY COUNCIL

Chair: Dr. Glenn Paulson, Science Advisor

Wednesday, December 11, 2013

1:00 – 3:00 p.m. ET

STPC Members and Presenters: Glenn Paulson (Agency Science Advisor, Chair), Beverly Banister (Region 4), Carole Braverman (for Bharat Mathur, Region 5), Howard Cantor (Region 8), Thomas Carpenter (for Chris Zarba, AO-SABSO), Nanci Gelb (OARM), Joe Greenblott (for David Bloom, OCFO), Ron Hammerschmidt (for Mark Hague, Region 7), Monica Jones (for Vaughn Noga, OEI), Robert Kavlock (ORD), Ron Landy (for William Early, Region 3), Al McGartland (OP-OA), Michael Morton (for Sam Coleman, Region 6), Jackie Mosby (OCHP), Ed Ohanian (for Michael Shapiro, OW), Dale Pahl (ORD), George Pavlou (Region 2), Michelle Pirzadeh (Region 10), Kathleen Raffaele (for Barry Breen, OSWER), Betsy Shaw (OAR), Tracy Sheppard (for Brenda Mallory, OGC), Louise Wise (OCSPP).

1. Introductory Remarks:

Dr. Glenn Paulson welcomed the Science and Technology Policy Council (STPC) members and asked Anand Mudambi (OSA) to conduct the roll call. Dr. Paulson made several announcements:

- Dr. Paulson introduced Dr. Francesca Grifo, who joined EPA from the Union of Concerned Scientists as the Agency's new Scientific Integrity Official. Dr. Grifo thanked Dr. Paulson for his introduction and remarked that she was on a steep learning curve and looking forward to meeting with members of the Scientific Integrity Committee.
- Dr. Paulson stated that he made a presentation at an EPA Science Advisory Board (SAB) public meeting last week on the activities of the Office of the Science Advisor, including the STPC's work and history. His viewgraphs for that presentation are available through OSA. Administrator Gina McCarthy and Bob Kavlock (ORD) also made presentations.
- Dr. Paulson provided a status report on EPA's new Conflict of Interest (COI) policy, which is expected to be fully in place by mid-2014. The Environmental Defense Fund is already using the new process to raise issues regarding the potential or actual COI of four panel members for two peer review panels, and those issues were successfully resolved.
- Dr. Paulson announced that Virginia Houk (ORD) and John Forren (R3) are the new co-chairs of the Peer Review Advisory Group (PRAG). He thanked Cheryl Itkin (ORD) and Vincia Holloman (OEI) for their substantial work as the co-chairs during the revision of EPA's Peer Review Handbook. They will continue as members of the PRAG, which has completed its review of the

draft Handbook. A small work group has been evaluating the comments received, but their schedule was delayed by the government shutdown in October. A revised draft is expected in January 2014, which the STPC will review. Approval is expected to occur by email ballot in February.

Action Item:

STPC members may request Dr. Paulson's viewgraphs from his presentation to the SAB by contacting Martha Otto at otto.martha@epa.gov.

2. National Research Council (NRC) Risk Assessment Reports Workgroup

Highlights:

- Dr. Paulson introduced the presentation by the NRC Risk Assessment Reports Workgroup co-chairs—Al McGartland (OP) and Ed Ohanian (OW)—emphasizing the extensive amount of work completed by the Workgroup. He noted that Dr. Thomas Burke, who will be joining EPA in 2014 as the Assistant Administrator for the Office of Research and Development, co-chaired the NRC committee that wrote the *Science and Decisions* report that is a core part of the Workgroup's recommendations.
- Al presented 10 slides providing an overview of the Workgroup's process, its membership and its request to the STPC for concurrence on recommended actions that were selected by Workgroup members through a ranking procedure. He noted that the Workgroup will return to the STPC in March, after receiving feedback by January 17, 2014, to provide a draft implementation plan for the recommendations, including resource needs and proposed lead organizations. Dr. Paulson observed that Senate Environment and Public Works staffer Grant Cope, who had been a prime motivator of the Workgroup's efforts, has left the Committee, but Committee Chair Barbara Boxer (D-CA) and her staff remain deeply interested. Al noted that a unified approach to dose-response is highly contentious across EPA, but the Workgroup spent the most time on the issue and reached a strong consensus on the importance of moving forward with this far-reaching change to how EPA conducts risk assessments for noncarcinogenic agents. Al underscored that the recommendations are initial steps on a long road.
- Ed presented slides describing each of the Workgroup's individual recommendations responding to specific NRC recommendations contained in four reports. He noted that the priority recommendations were distilled from an approximately 50-page spreadsheet. White papers were developed for each category of recommendations. Ed explained the color coding for the recommendations, with green indicating ongoing activities, blue indicating activities to be initiated in the short-term and black indicating activities to be pursued over the long-term. He stated that the Workgroup was not seeking the STPC's ultimate feedback on the recommendations at this meeting but was briefing the Council to receive feedback on whether the recommended activities are agreeable. He urged the STPC members to consult with their Risk Assessment Forum and STPC Steering Committee members.

- Al noted that the recommendations regarding a unified approach to dose-response assessment are the most significant departure from current EPA risk assessment practice and will help Agency economists enormously in conducting cost-benefit analyses. The recommendations do not call for eliminating the Reference Dose but to overlay the carcinogen risk assessment dose-response approach.
- Ed noted that if STPC members wanted to propose activities as a higher priority that were not identified by the Workgroup as priorities, they should be prepared to offer staff time and funding. Ed stated that at the Society for Risk Analysis meeting this week in Baltimore, Maryland, a session on EPA's cumulative risk assessment activities drew more than 100 attendees and significant public interest.
- Dr. Paulson commented that the Workgroup's recommendations regarding Capacity Building, which specifically called for succession planning, were qualitatively different from any other recommendations and may need to be considered separately by the STPC.
- In their feedback on the Workgroup's proposed activities, the STPC members should include any comments about activities that they believe should be priorities instead of other items on the final Workgroup list. The STPC members should comment on whether they believe the proposed activities are worthy of implementing through a detailed plan. Al and Ed are available to speak with any STPC members if they have additional questions about the Workgroup's proposed activities.
- Dr. Paulson motioned for the STPC members to authorize him to thank the Workgroup members, co-chairs and others who contributed to the effort for their hard work; the motion was seconded and adopted.

Action Item:

- STPC members will provide their concurrence (and/or comments) on the Workgroup's proposed activities to Anand Mudambi at mudambi.anand@epa.gov by January 17, 2014.
- STPC members may request from Anand the spreadsheet developed by the Workgroup containing all of the NRC recommendations and EPA activities that were the initial basis for the final Workgroup recommendations. They also may request the draft issue white papers that Workgroup members developed to aid their deliberations.

3. Laboratory Enterprise Study Workgroup Status

Highlights:

- Michelle Pirzadeh, one of the four Workgroup co-chairs, presented a draft timeline for the EPA Laboratory Enterprise Study. She and the other co-chairs—Nanci Gelb, Maryann Froehlich and Ramona Trovato—are working

with Dr. Paulson on the project. Since the STPC was updated on the effort in September, the timeline has been modified because the government shutdown in October delayed scheduled meetings. The most significant impact was the postponement of the EPA-Smith Group workshops to analyze the laboratory facility portfolios; the workshop scheduled for early October was held on November 19, 2013, instead and a second workshop is scheduled for December 18, 2013. Two additional workshop dates have yet to be determined. In addition, the NRC's public meeting that was scheduled for October was postponed until December 16-17, 2013. A subcommittee met on December 10, 2013, to review preliminary results from the study's data call-ins. Al asked if the Workgroup's draft report also would be delayed. Dr. Paulson responded that he hoped it would not; more may be known after the week of December 16, 2013.

- Betsy Shaw asked if the STPC would see the set of information slated to be presented to Deputy Administrator (DA) Bob Perciasepe on June 30, 2014. Dr. Paulson responded that the STPC would see that information; a briefing with DA Perciasepe is being held on December 13, 2014, to review what will be provided at the public session of the NRC meeting next week.
- Responding to a question, Dr. Paulson stated that the Workgroup will brief the Office of Management and Budget on the status of the NRC report, not its substance. Dale Pahl added that the NRC is fully aware that EPA is not relying on its committee for advice on the physical laboratory facilities, such as their energy and water use and other such issues; the Smith Group will provide that advice. Dale said that EPA's contract with the NRC stipulates that a pre-publication version of its report will be available for the Agency on June 2014 and he has received verbal assurance from the NRC project officer that such a report will be delivered. Dr. Paulson clarified that the Smith Group report will not address the state of scientific contributions made by EPA's laboratories; the Agency will address those substantive science issues. He also noted that the publications that EPA issues will include options for review and comments by stakeholders.

4. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 2:45 p.m. The next STPC meeting is March 12, 2014, from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m.